

SB 260 Senate Committee Brief

*For the
Fish and Game Committee*

Patrick M. Tabor

Vice-President in Succession – Montana Outfitters & Guides Association
President – Professional Wilderness Outfitters Association
Owner Swan Mountain Outfitters

Purpose

Succinctly put, this bill is seeking to provide an additional tool to the Commission to better manage predators that are subject to drawing a permit.

History

Nearly 8 years ago, the Commission instituted the utilization of draw permits to manage lion hunting opportunities in Regions 1 and 2. This was done in response to social conflicts between resident houndsmen, local hunters and outfitters. At that time, all districts were managed as open quota that resulted in unacceptable social conflicts in the field, unethical harvest practices, and poor management of the species harvest outcomes through a stressful 1-800 district monitor/closure system. The new system of issuing permits would bring ethics and normalcy to managing the species, and eliminate the social conflicts in the field. While the new system did in fact successfully accomplish those goals, three main negative impacts resulted that have yet to be addressed:

1. Actual management of lion populations has not been held in check as not all permit holders harvest lions
2. Nonresident participation in lion hunting has plummeted and the resultant loss of tourism dollars has been material
3. Outfitters in Regions 1 & 2 who legally provided services to nonresidents had this portion of their business decimated

Process

Since adopting the new system, the outfitting industry has attempted many times to work with the Commission and the Department to come up with a more equitable solution that retained many of the solid benefits to the new system, but allowed for better balance and parity among ALL participants. The most significant breakthrough was the adoption of a hybrid method of permit usage/open quota application now is use in Region 2. Unfortunately due to the autonomy of Regional management within the Department, Region 1 was successful in preventing implementing this solution within that region. This legislation is an effort to attempt to create at least a minor contribution to try to improve nonresident and outfitter participation